

PROGRESS IN
THE
LIFE TO COME
BY JAMES M. GRAY

Jesuit-Krauss-McCormick Library

BT901 .G779

Gray, James M

MAIN

Progress in the life to come



3 9967 00202 8681



BT
901
G779

VIRGINIA LIBRARY



PRESBYTERIAN
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
CHICAGO

826 Belden Avenue

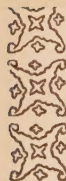


Borden

Training,

Fourth
Presbyterian Church
Chicago

"Go ye into all the world
and preach the gospel"



G 77²



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

Progress in the Life to Come

By James M. Gray, D. D.

Great Epochs of Sacred History. And the Shadows They Cast. 12mo, cloth, net 50c.

"A series of popular Bible Studies on the first twelve chapters of Genesis. This is a book well worth circulating."

—*N. Y. Observer.*

Satan and the Saint. The Present Darkness and the Coming Light. 16mo, cloth, net 50c.

"Will do much to clear away confusion created by some of the religious phenomena of the present day."—*Christian Intelligencer.*

The Antidote to Christian Science. 12mo, cloth, net 75c.

"The most reasonable, the fairest and the most practically useful of all the writings against Christian Science which we have seen."—*Watchman.*

Synthetic Bible Studies. 8vo, cloth, net \$1.50.

"We know of no similar work by which one can get so satisfactory and comprehensive a view of the Bible."—*Christian Work.*

Primers of the Faith. Biblical Introduction and Christian Evidences. 2d Edition. 12mo, cloth, net \$1.00.

"A book that every Bible reader will be better for having."—*United Presbyterian.*

Progress in the Life to Come. A new edition of "*The History of the Holy Dead.*" 12mo, boards, net 35c.

Progress in the Life to Come

By
JAMES M. GRAY

*Minister in the Reformed Episcopal Church,
and Dean of The Moody Bible In-
stitute of Chicago*



NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO
Fleming H. Revell Company
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

PRESBYTERIAN THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY LIBRARY,
CHICAGO

Copyright, 1910, by
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

150

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 125 N. Wabash Avenue
Toronto: 25 Richmond Street, W.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 100 Princes Street

B
90
G-77

Contents

I.	THE ANALOGY OF THE PRESENT LIFE	7
II.	FROM THE DEATH OF ABEL TO THE DEATH OF CHRIST	12
III.	FROM THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST UNTIL HIS COMING AGAIN	32
IV.	THE MILLENNIAL REIGN	43
V.	AFTER THE THOUSAND YEARS	49
VI.	CONCLUDING MEDITATIONS	58

Note

THE substance of these pages, a North-field Conference address, was published originally under the title "The History of the Holy Dead." But a new edition being called for, and the plates of the former one having been accidentally destroyed, the opportunity was taken to revise and enlarge the treatment of the theme and change its title to "Progress in the Life to Come."

The Divine blessing was vouchsafed upon the earlier work in the instruction and comfort of its readers, and the author prays that it may not be withheld from this.

J. M. G.

Progress in the Life to Come

I

THE ANALOGY OF THE PRESENT LIFE

THE subject of our thought is the history of the holy dead, or Progress in the Life to Come.

The word "holy" refers not so much to the condition of the righteous after death, which is of course a holy one, but to their condition before that event.

While alive on the earth they were holy or righteous however, not in the sense that no sin dwelt *within* them, for "there is none righteous, no not one"; but in the sense that no sin dwelt *upon* them, because through their faith in Jesus Christ their guilt had been transferred to Him "who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities."

8 Progress in the Life to Come

AGES AND DISPENSATIONS ON EARTH

Such as these have a history after leaving these scenes just as when they mingled among them. For

“It is not death to die ;
To leave this weary road,
And 'midst the brotherhood on high
To be at home with God.

“It is not death to fling
Aside this sinful dust,
And rise, on strong exulting wing,
To live among the just.”

The history of God's people on this earth has been dispensational. That is, it has been divided into different ages or epochs in which God has developed His purposes or revealed Himself differently to them. The body of privileges bestowed upon them, or the duties and responsibilities required of them, have changed with these changing periods.

Some Bible students have divided these different ages or periods into seven. For example, there was the Adamic age when

The Analogy of the Present Life 9

man dwelt in the Garden of Eden in a state of innocence, and was simply under restraint to abstain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Then came the antediluvian age when man was under the dominion of conscience as a basis for moral judgments. This was followed by the Noachic age when, to some extent, human government was committed to the hands of men. Then the patriarchal, with its gracious promises to Israel, conditional and unconditional. The Mosaic, when God's people were placed under the law of Sinai. The Christian, when they came out from law and entered into a position entirely of grace. The Millennial age will follow, to be marked by the personal reign of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And indeed we are able to speak of an eighth age, which some would call the kingdom age, or the Eternal age, when all sin and all authority inimical to God and His Son shall have been put down; and

10 Progress in the Life to Come

when on the earth regenerated, the tabernacle of God shall be with men and He shall be their God and they shall be His people forevermore.

A PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

As we have said, in all these ages God has dwelt with His people in a way peculiar to that age. The manner in which He revealed Himself to them, the means by which they obtained access to His presence, the outward characteristics of their spiritual life—all these things were somewhat different in one period from what they were in another. And not only different, but in a sense progressive and developmental—one revelation of God, and of man in his relation to God, unfolding itself into another.

We see this illustrated in the prophecies of the Redeemer. "The seed of the woman" in Eden, somewhat vague and indefinite, is lined into stronger relief at a

later period in the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. "The Lion of the Tribe of Judah," of the patriarchal age, is a prophet like unto Moses, the son of David who shall sit upon His throne forever, and the suffering servant of Jehovah in the following age. And finally all these foreshadowings find their wonderful fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth, the Divine-human Saviour of the world, crucified, risen, ascended, interceding, and coming again in power and glory.

This ever-growing revelation of the Redeemer and the plan of redemption He came to execute, resulted necessarily in an ever-enlarging spiritual apprehension on their part to whom the revelation came, with all that such an apprehension meant in the fruit of faith and hope, and peace and joy.

II

FROM THE DEATH OF ABEL TO THE DEATH OF CHRIST

WE saw in the preceding chapter that God has dealt with His people in this life in a dispensational and progressive way, and analogy would lead us to expect a corresponding method in the life to come. Nor is this expectation dulled by a perusal and comparison of the New Testament on the subject.

For example, we seem to see in its pages an epoch of the holy or righteous dead from the death of Abel to that of Christ. Then secondly, an epoch from the ascension of Christ to His coming again to this earth,—in other words, the present epoch. Thirdly, that from His second coming to the close of the Millennial age. And

finally, from the close of the Millennium throughout eternity.

Reason suggests distinctions in the condition of the holy dead under varying circumstances such as these, and how far reason is borne out by the word of inspiration will be seen, in part, in what follows.

We begin at Luke xxiii. 43, where Jesus says to the penitent thief upon the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

"Paradise" is a Greek word of Persian origin meaning a park or garden, which the Jews employed at this time to designate the abode of the righteous dead.

The abode of the dead in the general sense of both the righteous and the unrighteous they called by another name, "Sheol." But "Sheol" was conceived of as consisting of two realms or a place of two compartments, so to speak, one for the righteous and one for the unrighteous dead. The former was distinguished as Paradise, and to it Jesus departed on the day of His

14 Progress in the Life to Come

crucifixion, accompanied by the malefactor whom He had redeemed by His sacrificial death.

The word "Sheol" in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, however, is identical with "Hades" in the Greek of the New. And bearing this in mind, the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke xvi. will aid in illustrating the idea of the different realms or compartments it is thought to contain.

For example, after drawing a picture of the earthly environment of each, Jesus said, "The beggar died and was carried by the angels unto Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; and in *Hades* (not "hell" as in the King James version), he lifted up his eyes being in torment."

Quoting Swett in his "Thesis on The Intermediate State," "The scene is cast in the same general locality, undoubtedly Hades. Each beholds the other and they converse freely together. But for the first time in the Bible we meet with a vivid

portrayal of the changed conditions,—one soul happy and at rest, while the other is in fearful torment.

“We further notice a division of people there. The wicked are separated from the good by a great gulf. The condition of Lazarus at peace and comforted in Abraham’s bosom presents a fair picture of Paradise, while the rich man in his remorse and sin gives us a terrible view of the lost and unbelieving in the eternal burnings of despair.”

We can thus easily suppose Hades (or Sheol) to be divided in two compartments, one the delightful Paradise, and the other the fearful prison house of sin.

PARADISE NOT HEAVEN

But the Paradise, to which Jesus went on that occasion, was not heaven. It has indeed become identified with heaven since that time for we find Paul so referring to it in the twelfth chapter of 2 Corinthians.

16 Progress in the Life to Come

In the second verse he speaks of himself on one occasion as having been "caught up to the third heaven," and in the fourth verse, clearly with reference to the same event, he says he "was caught up into Paradise," as though the terms were interchangeable.

It is these words of Paul that give warrant to the beautiful hymn of Faber when, in expressing the longing desire of the New Testament saint, he exclaims :

" O Paradise ! O Paradise !
Who doth not crave for rest ?
Who would not seek the happy land
Where they that loved are blest ? "

But however the word may have thus come to be identified with heaven, especially after our Lord's ascension there, it was not so identified by Him apparently in His promise to the penitent thief.

As a matter of fact, the word "heaven" is used in Scripture in three senses, which the author quoted above lucidly defines thus :

“The first is the airy space next to the surface of the earth, in which the birds, the dew, and the clouds exist and move. Job xxxv. 11: ‘Wiser than the fowls of heaven.’ Acts xiv. 17: ‘In that He did good and gave us rain from heaven.’ Daniel iv. 25: ‘And they wet thee with the dew of heaven.’ Psalm cxlvii. 8: ‘Who covereth the heaven with clouds.’

“The second is the firmament (expanse), the starry canopy beyond the atmosphere. Gen. i. 17: ‘And God set them (sun, moon and stars) in the firmament of heaven.’ Deut. xvii. 3: ‘And hath gone and worshipped them, either the sun, moon or any of the stars of heaven.’

“The third, or heaven of heavens, is God’s dwelling-place. 1 Kings viii. 30: ‘And hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling-place.’ Psalm xi. 4: ‘The Lord’s throne is in heaven.’ Isa. lxvi. 1: ‘The heaven is My throne.’ Matt. vi. 9: ‘Our Father which art in heaven.’ 1 Kings viii. 27:

18 Progress in the Life to Come

‘But will God indeed dwell on the earth ? Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee.’ ”

That Jesus and the penitent thief did not go to heaven in this last-named sense on the day of the crucifixion might be gathered from our Lord’s words to Mary Magdalene on the morning of the resurrection.

When, in her enthusiasm, she possibly would have embraced Him, He gently restrained her by saying : “ Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father.”

If He had not yet ascended to His Father could He as yet have gone to heaven ? He had entered Paradise indeed, but Paradise was not heaven.

JESUS IN HEAVEN NOW

Nor does it seem that He *did* ascend to heaven until the forty days had elapsed after His resurrection. Then on a certain day, leading His disciples out as far as Bethany, He blessed them, and was parted

from them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight (Luke xxiv. 50, 51).

That He ascended into heaven then is deduced from the testimony of the two in white apparel, who, accosting the disciples, said :

“ Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven ” (Acts i. 10, 11).

And indeed to this witness of the angels might be added that of the earliest martyr, Stephen, who,

“ Being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

“ And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God ” (Acts xii. 55, 56).

Some of the timid and doubting among the saints wonder whether we shall really behold the glorified Jesus in the life to come. But it would appear from this that

20 Progress in the Life to Come

we are only lacking in faith and in the Holy Ghost, or we should be able to see Him even here.

LEADING CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE

But on the occasion of Christ's ascension into heaven, we are not to suppose He entered that glorious abode alone.

In Paul's epistle to the Ephesians (iv. 8), he quotes the language of the Sixty-eighth Psalm as applying to Jesus, saying :

“ When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive,” or, as the margin reads, “ He led a multitude of captives captive.”

Curiosity is awakened as to the history of these captives who thus accompanied Jesus into heaven. And a very likely answer is that they were those He had redeemed out of every nation and tongue from the death of Abel up until that time—the time of His ascension.

And in the meantime where had they been? Where were they awaiting this

event in their posthumous experience? What locality is more probable than that already suggested, Paradise?

But if they were saints in Paradise, why should they be called captives? We may reply, could they have been any other than *glad and willing* captives? Jesus is now a conqueror returning to His native country, and those who thus accompany Him are following in His train as the trophies of His victory over His enemies—Sin, Satan and Death.

They swell the grand hosannas, and join antiphonally from without the angelic chorus within, as they chant, in solemn and yet joyous measure, the triumphant pæan:

“Lift up your heads, oh, ye gates!
And be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors;
And the King of glory shall come in!”

As Dr. Kendrick in the American Commentary on Hebrews xi. 39–40 expresses it:—“All Hades must have thrilled with the great fact of accomplished redemption.

22 Progress in the Life to Come

Its gates sprang back on their hinges, and its righteous occupants rose into a hitherto unknown freedom and salvation. The boundary line between the saints of the two dispensations was obliterated. Whatever blessedness henceforth belonged to the dead who died in their Lord, belonged equally to their Old Testament predecessors."

CHRIST PREPARING A PLACE

This view of Christ's ascension and the translation of the righteous with Him from Paradise to heaven is not very often dwelt upon in Christian teaching, and illustration or defense of it from other portions of the Bible will be welcomed doubtless.

In Lange's commentary on Revelation, for example, Dr. E. R. Craven has a scholarly "Excursus on Hades," from which one or two quotations are here submitted.

Take, for example, the comforting words of Jesus in John xiv. 2 :

“In My Father’s house are many mansions; . . . I go to prepare a place for you.”

The implication seems to be that this “place” had not been prepared for His disciples while yet Jesus had not been crucified and risen from the dead. His death and resurrection seem to have been necessary to its preparation. In other words, a change in the condition of the righteous or holy dead apparently occurred at that time, a change, that is, in comparison with their condition theretofore.

That *some* effect was felt in the realm of the dead seems to Dr. W. J. Erdman to be attested by that mysterious Scripture in Matt. xxvii. 52, 53, where it is written :

“And the graves were opened ; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

“And came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”

“These at least ascended with Him,” says Dr. Erdman, “and are dwelling in heaven

24 Progress in the Life to Come

as the trophies of His power over death and Hades.

“And while these may have been the only embodied saints, and selected for aught we know as saints lately deceased, and recognizable by the many to whom they appeared, yet it does not exclude the supposition that all the righteous spirits may have been the captive host with which Jesus ascended on high.

“No language is more common in the Old Testament than that of ‘returning’ or ‘bringing back the captivity of Israel,’ and though the words ‘led captivity captive’ are not exactly the same, yet the same meaning is doubtless in both. These saints until the Redeemer came were no less than captives. An enemy held them in bondage and in a foreign land ; and they truly were prisoners in hope of a great deliverance (Zech. ix. 11, 12).

“Nothing seems more likely than such deliverance ; and a confirming hint is given

of such a change of condition and of place in the transfer of the name Paradise from the locality in Hades to one in the heavens," as seen in Paul's words to the Corinthians already quoted.

But to return to Dr. Craven, who now quotes Hebrews xi. 39, 40 :

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise :

"God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

And adds:—"The inspired writer, in this instance, is referring to the Old Testament worthies—Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and the rest, who, as harmonizing with what has just been said, were awaiting in Paradise the events which culminated at Golgotha and Bethany, and which enabled them to enter, with Jesus, that more perfect state of heaven, whither the New Testament saints do now go immediately at death."

26 Progress in the Life to Come

Compare in this case Hebrews xii. 22-24, where the spirits of just men, now in heaven, are said to be "made perfect," while previously they were not made perfect. Surely this must have been a different condition of being from what existed before, and yet as we shall see by and by, it is not even yet the perfected condition which shall be.

THE SPIRITS IN PRISON

In the earlier edition the author has quoted 1 Peter iii. 18-22 as further sustaining this view, where the apostle speaks of Christ as "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit, by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison."

The Greek word translated "preached" in this instance conveys rather the sense of *proclaimed*, and it was suggested that the "spirits in prison" thus visited were the righteous dead in Paradise awaiting this

proclamation of the finished work of Jesus in order to their translation to a higher state.

But he now doubts the correctness of this view of the passage, and has come to agree with those who believe that "spirits" in this case refers not to men but to evil angels, who are the same as those "sons of God" mysteriously spoken of in Genesis vi. 1-4. To these Jesus went not to preach the Gospel indeed, or proclaim deliverance of any kind, but for a different reason altogether. Those who have read the author's "Great Epochs of Sacred History," will have seen the working out of this idea more in detail, but it is impossible to dwell upon it here.

To return to our line of argument, however, for a concluding word, the thesis on the intermediate state, mentioned above, contains an interesting interpretation of Isaiah lxi. 1, 2, as sustaining it. The passage reads:

28 Progress in the Life to Come

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.”

“Here,” says the author, “are set forth the different characterizations of the work of the Messiah, from the time of His anointing in the Jordan at the beginning of His public ministry, to the day, yet in the future, of the proclamation of the Divine vengeance.

“That work is divided into four periods: There is (1) the incarnate mission of the Messiah, ‘to preach good tidings to the meek, and bind up the broken-hearted’; (2) His ex-carnate mission (after He has departed from the flesh), ‘to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound’; (3)

His post-resurrection mission, 'to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,' *i.e.*, the present period of gospel grace; and (4) His judgment mission (when He shall come again), to proclaim 'the day of vengeance of our God.'"

Without standing sponsor for the correctness of this interpretation by any means, which, nevertheless, is attractive, attention is called to the fact that it is the second period referred to which particularly relates to the present subject—the ex-carnate mission of Christ.

It is that where, after leaving the flesh, and prior to His ascension, He proclaimed liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison doors to them that were bound in Paradise, and gathered them in His train to the courts of heaven.

WHERE THE HOLY DEAD NOW GO

But omitting entirely any reference to the last two texts—in Peter and Isaiah, we

30 Progress in the Life to Come

have, nevertheless, defined two distinct epochs of the righteous dead.

The first included all the faithful from the death of Abel to that of Christ, who were awaiting that event in Paradise, and the second the same company who entered with Him into heaven, and who have since been joined by those who subsequently have departed this life in the same faith.

If it were thought desirable to clinch this last remark, and to prove from Scripture that the righteous dead do now go immediately to heaven, it might be sufficient to simply quote the words of Paul in Phil. i. 23, and 2 Cor. v. 8.

In the first instance, he describes himself as "in a strait betwixt the two," *i. e.*, between the choice of life or death, but "having the desire to depart and be with Christ"—an expectation as to whose realization he seemed to have no doubt. In the second, he comforts the afflicted in view of the dissolution of soul and body with

the remark, that while now "we are at home in the body" and "absent from the Lord," the reverse will then be true of us, and we shall "be absent from the body" but "at home with the Lord."

III

FROM THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST UNTIL HIS COMING AGAIN

WE have seen that up until the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ the location of the holy dead was in Paradise, a compartment of Sheol or Hades. But at His ascension they accompanied Him, as glad and willing captives, out of Paradise into heaven.

However the name Paradise may afterwards have come to be associated with heaven, it has a different significance now from that of the period antedating the ascension.

It is to this heaven, to this presence of Jesus and to "the spirits of just men made perfect" who are in heaven with Jesus, that they now pass who die in the Lord.

A STATE OF REST

But the question arises as to whether the holy dead, though now in heaven with Jesus, are *yet* perfect, *i. e.*, completely or absolutely so ?

It is not at all a question as to whether they are happy, or as to whether they have entered on a period of reward. All this is assumed without debate.

It is simply a question as to whether they have yet received all that God has in store for them. Or in other words, Is there nothing more to be expected in their progress or development, or, if you please, their evolution towards perfection ?

There are certain cogent reasons for believing that there is.

I. In the first place, *the holy dead are as yet merely in a state of rest.* It is not a state of unconsciousness necessarily, but rest. Their happiness is unalloyed, no doubt, but nevertheless passive rather than active in its character. Revelation vi. 11 and

34 Progress in the Life to Come

xiv. 13 will illustrate this though they do not dogmatically prove it.

In the first Scripture, "the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God and for the testimony they held," are seen "under the altar."

"And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

"And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

In the second Scripture, after the fall of Babylon, the revelator hears a voice from heaven saying unto him :

"Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

MAN AN ACTIVE BEING

But man was not made for rest but activity. Created in the image of God he was intended for life with all the term implies of motion, force, freedom, change, influence, exertion, progress. He was not meant to sleep but to serve. When we lie down at night, we appreciate the rest and thank God for the opportunity. But if the night be long, the rest grows wearisome, and we pray for the morning to go forth to labour.

It is not inconceivable, and indeed there are Scriptures justifying the thought, that the holy dead look with anticipative joy for the dawn of the resurrection when, in a sense hardly included in Isaiah's prophecy, they "shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint."

And, is it replied, that such a conception of their state diminishes the joy associated

36 Progress in the Life to Come

with it? Not more so, one would think, than it limits the enjoyment of a youth that he is not yet a man. Not more so, than it limits the joy of any Christian at the present moment that the Millennium is yet to come. Anticipation is often an essential element of joy, and to deny it to the holy dead would be itself a serious limitation.

A DISEMBODIED STATE

II. In the second place, the holy dead are not only resting, and in that sense still imperfect, but *they are also disembodied* which emphasizes the fact yet more.

Man cannot be perfectly complete in happiness until perfectly complete in himself. To quote a distinguished theologian, "The end of God's ways is corporeity." The Divine thought contemplates its phenomenal expression in some form, and for this reason there seems instinct in man the desire, and if one may so say, the

demand to be embodied. He cannot be perfectly happy without it, and this means that he cannot be perfectly happy until his body is raised from the dead and in a manner restored to him again.

This indeed is the acme or goal of the Gospel. It is the spring of its comfort, the soul of its inspiration. Listen to Paul in his second epistle to the Corinthians (iv. 17-v. 1), where he encourages himself and others in the hour of trial with the words:

“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

* * * *

“For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

By “our earthly house of this tabernacle” he means our bodily frame. It may be dissolved by death and pass into decay, but

38 Progress in the Life to Come

for all that, there is another house for us who believe on Jesus Christ. Nor is it a temporary tabernacle, but a permanent building—not a movable tent but an eternal abode. This is our hope and our expectation.

And still more, the apostle expresses a *longing* for this building, saying in a subsequent verse :

“ We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened : not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”

It was not the present condition of saints in heaven, however blessed and happy, which he held before himself or others as the object of glôrious anticipation, but that which followed after it. It was the *clothed* condition of which he thought, not the unclothed, the embodied, not the disembodied state.

His mind is resting on the resurrection, just as in his first epistle to the same church,

where at chapter xv. 42–44, speaking of the body that shall be, he says :

“It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption :

“It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power :

“It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”

Indeed so great an event is this for which the regenerated man waits as to ramify the universe. “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now . . . waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” (Rom. viii. 22, 23).

THE HOLY DEAD A COLLECTIVE BODY

III. In the third place, these things are true of the holy dead *considered not only individually, but collectively*. Collectively they are resting and collectively they are disembodied.

40 Progress in the Life to Come

The significance of this collectiveness can be appreciated only as we recall that the complete number of the redeemed constitutes a peculiar company.

They are said to be the "Bride" of the Lamb, and there is a sense in which the Bride must be made completely ready for the Bridegroom.

Again they are called "the Church which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 22, 23). Now if the Church be Christ's "fullness," there is a sense in which even Christ Himself has not attained unto His complete stature while yet a single member of that Church, which is His body, is to be added unto Him.

Consider Paul's words in Ephesians iv. 8-13 as bearing upon this. He tells us that when Christ ascended on high leading captivity captive, He "gave gifts unto men," *i. e.*, unto His Church.

These gifts included apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers; and the

reason for giving them was that by them the saints might be perfected unto the work of ministering.

And this ministering was for the edifying or building up of the body of Christ; the object or end for which building up was that we might "all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect (or full-grown) man."

And this "perfect or full-grown man," of whom Paul thus speaks, is not an individual man, such as you or I, but the collective man, the mystical or spiritual organism of which Christ is the Head and we as believers on Him are the body.

I am here quoting from "The Glory of the Body of Christ," by E. L. Ströter, who referring to the seventeenth verse of this chapter says: "The apostle does not clearly say that we should all come to be full-grown men (or women); but the aim is one full-grown Man, even the 'one new Man'

42 Progress in the Life to Come

in Christ Jesus, of whom he wrote before in chapter ii. 15.

“This divine creation ‘in Christ Jesus’ is to reach its perfection and unity in its oneness of life with the Head.

“The idea then is not that each believer should be in himself a perfect copy of the great original, Christ, in all His fullness; but, rather, that the entire body richly and variedly gifted and wonderfully fashioned should as a whole attain to the fullness of the stature of Christ.”

This is the end towards which the whole church in heaven and on earth is progressing; and until this end is reached, until Christ’s body is thus edified or built up, and hence made ready for manifested union with its Head, the members of that body in heaven or on earth must wait in a state of organic imperfection.

IV

THE MILLENNIAL REIGN

THE conclusion thus far is that the holy dead now go immediately to heaven, where in a state as yet imperfect, they are awaiting the full consummation of their redemption. This consummation takes place when they enter upon their manifested union with Christ.

But when shall this manifested union occur? When shall the Bride be made ready for the Bridegroom, or the body have become prepared for glorification with its Head? The Scriptures are a unit in replying that it shall be when Jesus comes again.

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Col. iii. 4).

“Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ :

44 Progress in the Life to Come

“ Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself ” (Phil. iii. 20, 21).

“ Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is ” (1 John iii. 2).

“ For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first :

“ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord ” (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17).

“ And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them : and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands ; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

“ But the rest of the dead lived not again

until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on which the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Rev. xx. 4-6).

THE CHURCH TRANSLATED

That idea “caught up, . . . to meet the Lord in the air,” so strange to human ears, has the most intimate bearing on our theme. It shows us that the life of the holy dead during the Millennium shall be lived, as it were, neither in heaven nor on the earth, but rather between the two, and yet doubtless having access to both spheres.

In substance, Benjamin Wills Newton says: “The heavenly instrumentality which is to give effect in the Millennial earth to those things which God has promised by His prophets, is found in the heavenly exaltation of Christ and His Church.

“And yet although associated with

46 Progress in the Life to Come

Christ in power strictly heavenly and divine, the Church will also share in His lower glories, those He will exercise in the earth as heir of the throne of David, in Jerusalem.

“The inhabitants of Jerusalem and Palestine will be strictly in an earthly condition, *i. e.*, they will have bodies of flesh and blood just as had Peter, James and John when they saw Jesus in transfigured glory on the Mount, conversing with Moses and Elijah” (Matt. xvii.).

Indeed, to interpolate a paragraph not quoted from Mr. Newton, Moses and Elijah on the Mount may represent the risen and translated saints in the Millennium just as the three disciples represent Israel in the flesh in that day. As there was a certain kind of communication between the heavenly and the earthly then, so may we expect a corresponding one throughout the whole of the Millennium.

“The Spirit of God will be poured out

upon all flesh in that day, and the terror commonly experienced by human beings in such communication will be removed. For this reason the rulers of God's earthly city, *i. e.*, Israel in the flesh, will be able to govern in wisdom and righteousness because heavenly persons, *i. e.*, the glorified Church, resident in the air, will counsel and direct and aid them."

"BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH"

To quote Mr. Newton further :

"During the Millennium the position of the Heavenly City, in other words, the Church, is intermediate between heaven and earth ; just as the Holy Place in the Tabernacle, where the priests ministered (of which it is the antitype), was intermediate between the Holy of Holies, which represented heaven itself, and the outer court where Israel worshipped on the earth.

"There was contiguity and connection between the various courts of the Taber-

48 Progress in the Life to Come

nacle ; but they were different, and had different services.

“Accordingly, throughout all the Millennium there will be a careful distinction maintained between the heavenly places, *i. e.*, the Church in the air, with all pertaining thereunto, and the earth and things therein.

“The inhabitants of the Heavenly City will minister to the sickness and need of the Millennial (earthly) nations (Rev. xxii. 2), but the city itself will never enter this fallen earth. It will wait until all things have been made new and suited to Him who is the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, *i. e.*, until the eternal age. Then and not before, will it be said, ‘The Tabernacle of God is with men.’ ”

V

AFTER THE THOUSAND YEARS

BUT is this all? Have we reached the end of the history of the holy dead? Is the epoch of the Millennium the final one of revelation? Is there nothing beyond the thousand years? "What saith the Scriptures?"

The Millennial age, so far as this earth is concerned, will conclude, as all its predecessors will have concluded, in a crisis of judgment.

Indeed, as Newton says, the Millennial age will show, more than any other age, the hopelessness of evil in the heart of man. The earth will then be peopled from pole to pole; its inhabitants will have before them the visible glory of the Heavenly City, with its redeemed company, resting

50 Progress in the Life to Come

above Mount Zion; all the experiences of past ages, all the excellency of God's power and goodness in the Millennium itself will have been opened to their view, but with what result?

When Satan is loosed again for a season, at the close of that period, they who in the meantime have not been regenerated and united to Jesus Christ, will once more yield to his seductions. They will even dare to compass the beloved City, the earthly Jerusalem, the citadel of the saints (Rev. xx. 7-9). It will be the tower of Babel over again, and magnified a thousandfold.

And it is then that fire comes down from God out of heaven and devours them. It is then that the history of fallen, though Millennial, earth ends. Flesh will again have corrupted its way, until at length God will cease to deal with it any longer, and all things will be made new.

The Millennium, in other words, is not the final state for those who will then in the

flesh be dwelling upon the earth ; neither is it the final state for those who, in their glorified bodies, will be reigning with Christ above the earth. It is only a step onward towards that still more blessed period when sin in the flesh and death shall be forever done away, and the Heavenly City, no longer dwelling above the earth, shall descend upon it, and there shall be "no more sea."

THE ULTIMATE STATE OF THE HOLY DEAD

The Apostle Paul would seem to be alluding to this, the ultimate state of the holy dead, where in 1 Cor. xv. 23-28, he treats of the order of the resurrection. That order includes three divisions :

1. Christ the first fruits.
2. Afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming.
3. Then cometh the end.

Nearly two thousand years have already elapsed between divisions one and two and

52 Progress in the Life to Come

at least one thousand will elapse between two and three.

The "end," of which Paul speaks, in other words, is the end of the Millennial age "when He (Christ) shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For He (Christ) must reign (*i. e.*, as the mediatorial God-man He must reign over the Millennial earth), until He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

"And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall also the Son Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

In other words, the mediatorial kingdom of Christ shall end, but the kingdom of God shall never end. The mediatorial power has been invested in the Son until the kingdoms of this world shall have become the

kingdom of our God and of His Christ, but this will not be until after the final crisis at the close of the Millennium. It is then that Satan himself is cast into the lake of fire. It is then that the great white throne is set, and the general judgment of all the rest of the dead takes place. Death and Hades are then cast into the lake of fire. The heavens and the earth flee away in that day, and the new heavens and new earth take their place. It is then that the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, comes down upon the earth. The tabernacle of God is then with men. He dwells with them. They are His people, and He is their God.

THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH

The Scripture is very silent concerning this later and final period of the history of the holy dead, but for an enlargement of the subject I would refer the reader to "After the Thousand Years," by George F. Trench, M. A.

54 Progress in the Life to Come

In the words of Mr. Newton, however, "We know not what new worlds may be created—what new spheres may be opened for the exercise of the powers of those who shall reign in life. But the new earth, made meet for the glory of Him who is 'the Second Man, the Lord from heaven,' will be the centre of the economy and order of creation. And it is as directing this economy, and as mistress of this order, that the Church is symbolized by the Holy City, and named 'Wife of the Lamb.'"

That it will be a real city, however, "the glorious home and capital of a glorified community" there can be little doubt. A material dwelling-place is as necessary for resurrected saints as for those now here in the flesh, and the writer heartily concurs with Dr. Craven, in the opinion that it should be regarded as no strange thing for God thus to grant us an inspiring, though general, description of its blessedness as a place.

The same authority rightfully distinguishes between the city itself and the new earth of which it will be the centre, and between its citizens and those in that period who will be the inhabitants of the earth. The latter may be the glorified subjects of the eternal kingdom, and may include others who, for any reason, did not attain unto the first resurrection. But the former, *i. e.*, the Church, will still be, and always, the risen and glorified saints, the Lamb's wife, the subjects of the first resurrection, those whom we are now considering as the heirs of progress in the life to come.

THE ETERNAL GLORY

As the City descends out of heaven, may its dwellers never return thither again? The answer to this question is found in their relation to and eternal union with Christ. Will He, who "ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things," be restricted to a glory that is be-

56 Progress in the Life to Come

low the heavens? No more will they, doubtless, who are associated with Him in His glory, and may "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth" (Rev. xiv. 4).

We know not the inner history of the composition of "St. Agnes Eve," but consciously, or unconsciously, Tennyson has placed upon the lips of the convent devotee the aspiration of the heart of the true Church always and everywhere, when she sings :

"As these white robes are soil'd and
dark,
To yonder shining ground ;
As this pale taper's earthly spark,
To yonder argent round ;
So shows my soul before the Lamb,
My spirit before Thee ;
So in mine earthly house I am,
To that I hope to be.

"Break up the heavens, O Lord ! and
far,
Thro' all yon starlight keen,
Draw me, Thy Bride, a glittering star,
In raiment white and clean.

“He lifts me to the golden doors ;
The flashes come and go ;
All heaven bursts her starry floors,
And strews her lights below,
And deepens on and up ! the gates
Roll back, and far within—
For me the Heavenly Bridegroom
waits,
To make me pure of sin.

“The Sabbaths of eternity,
One Sabbath deep and wide—
A light upon the shining sea—
The Bridegroom with His Bride !”

VI

CONCLUDING MEDITATIONS

AS one draws these meditations to a close three thoughts fasten themselves upon the mind.

1. The first is associated with the awful fact of sin. It is ever the same, whether the age be antediluvian, patriarchal, Mosaic, Christian or Millennial. It is that thing in the human heart which, dormant or active, is still opposed to God. External conditions do not affect it. Light in itself cannot remove it. To enter the kingdom of heaven, the man in whom it dwells (and in whom by nature, does it not dwell?) must be born again.

2. The second thought is associated with the hope of glory. No wonder that an inspired apostle speaks of it as "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

No wonder that he says the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with it.

The invading Cæsar, as he gazed upon the magnificence of Rome, exclaimed, "Who would not fight for such a city?"

But what was Rome at her supremest, in comparison with the glories of the New Jerusalem? Who would not fight for them against every enemy of the soul? Who would not suffer for them? Who in the prospect and hope of them, would not rather lose his life in the present time that he might find it unto life eternal?

3. The third thought associates itself with the work of Christ. It is to Him that we owe, and ever shall owe, these things. They are the benefits of His passion which accrue to us. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He hath reconciled us unto God and His Father, by His blood. He intercedes for us that we fail not. He sanctifies us by His Word and Spirit, and

60 Progress in the Life to Come

makes us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. He unites us to Himself by faith so that because He lives we may live also. The glory that He had with the Father before the world was He gives us.

Oh ! who would not confess, and hasten to confess, such a Saviour ? Who would not obey and submit himself in all things to such a Lord ?

We appeal to the lost, and beseech them to let the goodness of God lead them to repentance, and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ that they may be saved.

We appeal to the half-hearted and worldly Christians, that mortifying their members which are upon the earth, when Christ who is our life shall appear, they may also appear with Him in glory.

Printed in the United States of America.

By JAMES M. GRAY, D.D.

Great Epochs of Sacred History

And the Shadows They Cast

"A series of popular Bible Studies on the first twelve chapters of Genesis. Dr. Gray is an incisive, and at the same time spiritually helpful writer—a combination that is none too common. This is a book well worth circulating."—*N. Y. Observer.*

"In a striking way the author maintains his reputation of discussing the profoundest Biblical questions in a way that satisfies the deepest thinkers and at the same time interests those less accustomed to deep thinking."—

Institute Tie.

12mo cloth, net 50c.

SECOND EDITION

Satan and the Saint

THE PRESENT DARKNESS
AND THE COMING LIGHT

"Popular studies of the personalities of Satan, the evil of Christian Science, the power behind that medium, the heresies of the Millennial Dawn, the characteristics of the age-end, and the second coming of Christ."—

Reformed Church Messenger.

"Will do much to clear away confusion created by some of the religious phenomena of the present day."—

Christian Intelligencer.

"I have been greatly profited and delighted. It is well calculated to be eminently useful in these apostate days and I wish I were able to place a copy of the book in the hand of every Christian preacher in the land."—

Wm. Phillips Hall.

16mo cloth, net 50c.

DEVOTIONAL

ROBERT F. HORTON

The Triumphant Life : Life, Warfare and Victory through the Cross

16mo, Cloth, net 50c.

The author, one of the most influential preachers and devotional writers, presents an attractive volume of brief counsels on Faith and Duty.

CHARLES BROWN

Lessons from the Cross

16mo, Cloth, net 50c.

A volume of remarkable spiritual power which will also prove an incentive to further study of this great subject.

MILFORD HALL LYON

For the Life That Now Is

16mo, Cloth, net 75c.

"Emphasizes the power and presence of a life hid with Christ in God. It will be a revelation to many that there is such a correspondence between the needs of mankind and the provisions of redeeming grace."—*Reformed Church Messenger*.

HANNAH WHITALL SMITH

The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life

New Edition, with Decorative Lace Border and Lace Cover Design. 12mo, Cloth, net \$1.00.

A Handsome New Gift Edition of this famous Christian classic, which as a prominent writer once said will "transform the dark days of your life, as it has transformed those of thousands before you."

J. H. JOWETT

Our Blessed Dead

16mo, Boards, 25c.

A booklet of consolation; suggestive and effective.

CORTLAND MYERS

The Real Holy Spirit

12mo, Cloth, net 50c.

"To make this unreality real and mighty in the life of the individual and of the Church is the purpose of this book, that is eminently sane and practical, and will appeal with force to every thoughtful and earnest Christian."—*Christian Guardian*.

CORTLAND MYERS, D. D.

Real Prayer

12mo, cloth, net 50c.

"Dr. Myers' purpose in writing this book is to make real the power which comes from the habit of prayer. The reality of this dynamic spiritual force is clearly set forth in chapters on the Real Power, the Real Presence, the Real Purity, the Real Plea, the Real Persistence and the Real Purpose of Prayer."—*Service*.

HENRY C. MABIE, D. D.

The Divine Reason of the Cross

A Study of the Atonement as the Rationale of Our Universe. 12mo, cloth, net \$1.00.

Principal P. T. Forsyth of Hackney College, London, says: "I have found the book very suggestive. I wish the view you promote might get more hold to deepen religion and save it from shallowness. I am sure if the Church is to remain a real Society and not be swallowed up in human Society it must be secured in a far deeper grasp of Christ's Cross on the lines you serve so well."

PERCY C. AINSWORTH

Threshold Grace Meditations in the Psalms.

16mo, cloth, net 50c.

"A very delightful and helpful new volume of meditations in the Psalms, full of devotional reflections for the quiet hour, which make a personal appeal to every Christian man or woman. It is a very well wrought out book of devotion, and pleasing and readable throughout."—*Herald and Presbyter*.

S. D. GORDON

The Consummation of Calvary

Its Foreshadowings, Facts and Spirit.

Idyll Envelope Series, net 25c.

"Mr. Gordon presents the subject with remarkable skill and penetration and the publishers have really outdone themselves in presenting this charming booklet."

—*California Christian Advocate*.

WILLIAM EDWARD BIEDERWOLF

A Help to the Study of the Holy Spirit

New Edition. 12mo, cloth, net 75c.

"Especially clear and valuable is the chapter on the 'Filling of the Spirit.' This seems to me one of the best presentations of the meaning of this great scriptural phase I have ever read."—*Prof. Henry Goodwin Smith, Lane Theological Seminary*.

Synthetic Bible Studies

By JAMES M. GRAY

8vo, cloth, \$1.50 net

"HE avoids as much as possible any mechanical analysis, and the lessons he gives are the larger ones drawn from a whole section rather than those taken from the exposition of single texts."—*The Churchman*.

"It goes without argument, wherever the Bible is studied at all, that Dr. Gray is a master in his line of scripture treatment. As a pioneer in the field of synthesis, as applied to the investigation of Holy Writ for the benefit of popular audiences, he has wrought well. We venture the prediction that, if a studious pastor does the same amount of work with the same spirit of determination to know the mind of God, his congregations will increase in wisdom, in size, and in favor with God."

—*Religious Telescope*.

"The synthetic method has been so evidently blessed of God in promoting the study of the English Bible that no student can afford to ignore it, but will rather use it if possible for popular Bible classes."—*Institute Tie*.

"The purpose is to give the general scope and trend of each book and this is done with clear insight and great skill. All students of the Bible will find this book stimulating and helpful. It is a valuable aid to Bible study, and is a fine manual for classes."—*Western Recorder*.

"The work is in line with the trend of the religious and philosophic thought of the times, and should be welcomed as a valuable contribution to our religious literature. A book of reference, full of valuable suggestions to all ministers and teachers who wish to drink continually at the fountain-head of divine truth."—*United Presbyterian*.

"We know of no similar work by which one can get so satisfactory and comprehensive view of the Bible, it has left no point untouched, and as real study help, it is hardly possible to commend it too highly."

Christian Work and Evangelist.

[illegible]

Library Bureau Cat. no. 1137

This book may be kept

BT

901

G779

AUTHOR

75893

Gray, J.M.

TITLE

Progress in the life to
come.

DATE
LOANED

BORROWER'S NAME

DATE
RETURNED

4/19/49

Revalura

2/23/60

H. Kee

90713 '55

W.M. Smith

2490 B

San W



P9-EEY-885

